

## Bush charms Durban family

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DESPITE widespread condemnation of George W Bush for his occupation of Iraq, a Durban family said they felt "lucky and grateful" to have met the United States president on World Aids Day. The family, from North Beach, is HIV-positive.

Bush hailed the courage and determination of the family at a World Aids Day function.

Thandazile, 35, Lewis, 4, and Emily Darby, 5, were all diagnosed HIV-positive two years ago.

They are receiving support from Bush's Emergency Plan for Aids Relief through McCord Hospital in Overport.

They are three of more than 40 000 South Africans enrolled in the Aids treatment programme directly supported by the plan's funds.

At McCord Hospital there are 1 600 people on treatment, of whom 150 are children.

The plan is striving to prevent new HIV infections, provide care for 2.6 million orphans and vulnerable children and provide effective Aids treatment for 500 000 individuals over a five-year period.

Darby said she had been nervous at first when she had met Bush.

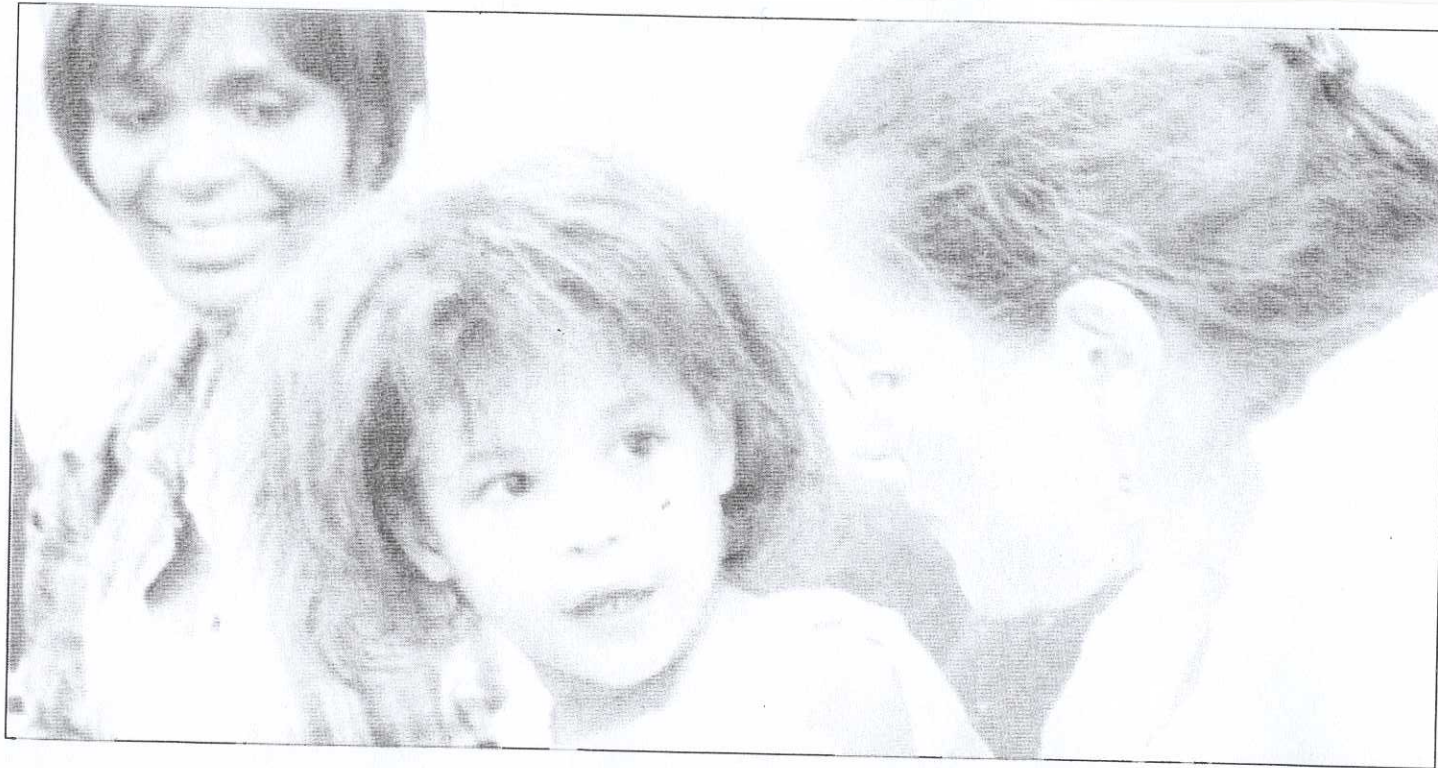
However, she had felt at home when she had seen the smile on his face.

"We spent about 10 minutes alone with him and I realised that the president was normal, like any other father," she said.

"Being there gave me the opportunity to thank him. It doesn't matter if you don't give anything in return, but a thank you is enough."

Bush thanked the mother of two for her strong example of courage.

He also treated the family to an exclusive trip to the Washington Zoo, where they saw a baby panda.



THANDAZILE Darby (left) and her daughter, Emily (centre), at the United States Consulate in Durban with Dr Janet Giddy, HIV Programmes Co-ordinator at McCord Hospital. The Darbys have returned from a trip to the US, where they spent time with President George W Bush on World Aids Day

PICTURE: SANDILE NDLOVU